



## The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare

Volume 26

Issue 1 March - Special Issue on Population Aging:  
Social Problems and Solutions

Article 12

March 1999

# Caregiving For and By Hispanic Elders: Perceptions of Four Generations of Women

Juanita L. Garcia  
*University of South Florida*

Jordan I. Kosberg  
*Florida International University*

Wiley P. Mangum  
*University of South Florida*

Neil Henderson  
*University of South Florida*

Colleen Cuervo Henderson  
*Maternal/Child Health Coalition - Tampa, Florida*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw>



Part of the [Gerontology Commons](#), [Latina/o Studies Commons](#), and the [Social Work Commons](#)

### Recommended Citation

Garcia, Juanita L.; Kosberg, Jordan I.; Mangum, Wiley P.; Henderson, Neil; and Henderson, Colleen Cuervo (1999) "Caregiving For and By Hispanic Elders: Perceptions of Four Generations of Women," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 26 : Iss. 1 , Article 12.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol26/iss1/12>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Social Work at ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact [maira.bundza@wmich.edu](mailto:maira.bundza@wmich.edu).



# Caregiving For and By Hispanic Elders: Perceptions of Four Generations of Women

JUANITA L. GARCIA

University of South Florida  
College of Arts and Sciences

JORDAN I. KOSBERG

Florida International University  
College of Urban and Public Affairs  
School of Social Work

WILEY P. MANGUM

University of South Florida  
College of Arts and Sciences

J. NEIL HENDERSON

University of South Florida  
College of Public Health

COLLEEN CUERVO HENDERSON

Maternal/Child Health Coalition  
Tampa, Florida

*So as to learn about the experiences of acculturation among older Hispanic women, four generations were interviewed about their ethnic identity, perceptions of gender equity in the home, life satisfaction, and beliefs regarding family caregiving responsibilities. Findings reveal general differences between hopes for, and experiences with, gender equity and in their self-identification as a member of a minority group and their perceptions of others toward them. Differences were also found among the four age groups of Hispanic women.*

## Introduction

*Hispanic Population in the U.S.* According to the 1990 Census, 6.4% of the population in the U.S. were considered to be Hispanic, and in 1995 Hispanics increased to slightly more than 10% of the U.S. population and will continue to have the highest proportion population increase among ethnic groups (U.S. Census, 1990, 1996). The Hispanic-origin population will add the largest number of people to the population in the next 50 years than all other racial or ethnic groups combined, and by the year 2050 they will constitute the largest ethnic group in the U.S. (Allinger & Causey, 1993). In Florida, earlier in the decade the proportion of Hispanics was 12.2% of all citizens in the state (Shermyon, 1990) and is slowly but steadily increasing. Indeed, they constitute the fastest growing minority in the U.S. and are expected to outnumber the Black minority by the year 2000 (Markides, 1987).

"Hispanic" actually refers to individuals of any race who have origins in a Spanish-speaking country (Crandall, 1991). The Hispanic label is frequently used to describe a subgroup of the general population. However, specific as to race, country of origin, and level of acculturation are important variables for understanding and describing various subgroups of the general population (including the aged) and particular groups as diverse as those identified as Hispanic (Burnette, 1998). The Hispanic population in the U.S. is largely made up of Mexican Americans (60%) who mainly reside in southwestern states. In addition, 14% of the Hispanic population are Puerto Ricans residing mainly in the northeastern states and 6% are Cuban residing mainly in Florida (Central and South Americans make up about 7% and "other" about 13%) (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990).

Hispanics may be of different races and have ties with many countries. Most Hispanics are Caucasian, but about 5% are Black, and some are carrying a heritage mixed with Arawak Indian, while others have Aztec, Mayan or Inca blood. They have ties with nations as geographically and politically disparate as Mexico, Chile, Cuba, the Caribbean Islands, Spain and Puerto Rico, to name a very few. Therefore, Hispanics are multi-racial, multi-national, and—thus—multi-cultural.

Although the Hispanic population is composed of persons

from different countries, with different immigration and assimilation experiences, the role of the family appears to be common to all (Cox & Monk, 1993). In a study of Hispanics, funded by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), comparing Florida Hispanics in Tampa and Miami (Sheppard, Mullins, and Longino, 1985), striking differences were found between the Hispanic populations living in these two areas of the state. A large number of Hispanics residing in Tampa were born in the U.S. Those born elsewhere were not recent immigrants, but had immigrated to Tampa many years ago. Immigration to the Miami area was more recent and a greater proportion of the population was foreign born.

As a whole, the Hispanic group is a young population (having a median age of 25.8 as opposed to 33.3 for the Non-Hispanics white population) and has a high birth rate. Consequently, the percentage of Hispanic elderly is relatively low: 5% of all Hispanics, as opposed to 12.4% for the total U.S. population (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990). The Hispanic elderly are generally in poor physical and mental health, undereducated (49% do not have a high school diploma and only 10% are college educated), almost one-quarter (23%) are living in poverty, and many have lost their family supports through the movement of their children. They have consistently been found to under-utilize formal support systems (Maldonado, 1975; Valle and Mendoza, 1978; Garcia, 1985; Torres-Gil and Negm, 1980; Garcia, et al., 1989; Lacayo, 1982). This is especially unfortunate, given research findings with regard to their higher rates of depression (Harwood, Barker, & Cantillon, in press), role strain (Cox & Monk, 1996), somatic symptoms (Escobar, Burnam, Karno, Forsythe, & Golding, 1987), and affective disorders (Kemp, Staples, & Lopez-Aqueres, 1987).

*Acculturation.* Hispanics are, thus, a quite heterogeneous group and a rapidly growing segment of the North American population (Krause & Goldenhar, 1992). With their increase in numbers, there has been increased interest in their process of acculturation. Vazquez, Garcia, and DeLeon (1987) state that the process of acculturation involves the changing of values, attitudes, behaviors and personality when two cultures come in contact. The work of Yancey (in Bean and Tienda, 1987) suggests that ethnicity forms

after immigration has taken place and is based upon a comparison with the dominant group. The boundaries become defined by the experience of the immigrants in the host society. Ethnic identity (with its psychological consequences and geographic boundaries) is strengthened in reaction to encountered hostility and discrimination directed to them by members of the dominant culture. It might be assumed that economically-deprived Hispanics, who face such prejudice, maintain a stronger identification with their ethnicity and minority status.

Yancey (in Bean and Tienda, 1987) maintains that even those Hispanics who have experienced positive reactions from members of the dominant society continue to maintain a "symbolic connection" to their ethnic heritage. This is manifested by their observance of traditional holidays, preparation of ethnic foods, and friendships with those with similar ethnic backgrounds. An example of this preference for ethnic-specificity is found in the work by Crawford (cited in Krause, Bennett and Van Tran, 1989) who has indicated that an overwhelming majority of older Mexican-Americans prefer to speak Spanish.

The PAHO study (Sheppard, Mullins, and Longino, 1985) had found more Hispanics in Tampa were bilingual and preferred to speak English than those residing in Miami. In general, the degree of acculturation among Hispanics residing in Tampa was significantly greater than for those residing in the Miami area. The difference in immigration patterns may account for some of these findings. Early immigrants from Cuba came to the U.S. for mainly political reasons. They tended to be wealthier, better educated and more likely to be professionals. This is in contrast to the more recent immigration by whose wishing to leave their poverty behind and seek better economic opportunities in the U.S.

One important area of inquiry, with respect to acculturation, is the changes in gender-related attitudes and behaviors. Indeed, changes in gender-related attitudes have occurred among members of the dominant culture over the past decade or two; yet, the changes occurring within the Hispanic group may be more abrupt and traumatic, due to the strength of cultural norms and the relative recency of immigration to the U.S.

The present study is an effort to learn about the experiences of acculturation from a sample of four age cohorts of Hispanic

women. These women were questioned about their behavior, role expectations, life satisfaction, and perceptions of themselves and their place in the community. This article reports on the differences and similarities in dealing with the cultural assimilation of gender-related roles, behaviors and expectations (including familial strength and supports) among four generations of Hispanic women in the Tampa Bay Area.

## Methods

*Sample.* A sample of 89 Hispanic women aged 18 to 89 was drawn in a two-phase sequence. First, a random selection was obtained from every 20th Hispanic-sounding surname in the local phone book (Tampa Area). Second, another group of Hispanic women was obtained from an earlier study and from women known by project staff.

All respondents were contacted by trained interviewers (thus, there was no personal connection between members of the sample and the principal investigators). The sample was initially contacted by phone, so as to determine whether the women met the criterion for inclusion in the study (being a Hispanic woman) and to solicit their agreement to be interviewed within their homes. Some potential respondents, otherwise meeting the criterion, refused to have an in-home interview.

*Instrument.* The 136-item interview schedule, constructed for this study, was based upon the investigators' previous research with a similar target population (Garcia, et al., 1989) and current literature regarding acculturation, ethnicity, and aging.

The instrument consisted of multiple forms of inquiry: Likert-type scales, fixed-option responses, and a case-based set of fixed-response questions pertaining to a hypothetical situation. It had been pre-tested on 15 Hispanic women, 60 and older, residing in adult congregate-living facilities (Garcia, et al., 1991). On the basis of the pre-test, slight modifications were made in the content and structure of the instrument.

*Interview Schedule Language.* The interview schedule was developed in English, then translated into Spanish by a panel of four Hispanic professional women for whom Spanish was their

native (first) language and/or who had bilingual Spanish-English capability. Translation difficulties were considered minimal by the field interviewers whose interviewing experiences discerned no problems from idiomatic usages or lack of clarity in the interview instrument.

Respondents chose which language (English or Spanish) to use in the interview. Although most respondents were bilingual, there was a fairly even division between those who chose to complete the interview in Spanish and in English.

*Project Interviewers.* Three women interviewers, fluent in English and Spanish, were recruited and trained in standardized administration of the instrument. Only one of the interviewers was age-matched to the subject. The other two were in their 20s and 30s. Anecdotally, the older interviewer reported that respondents seemed very comfortable with her, whereas the younger interviewers reported smoothly-conducted interviews, but with some formal social behaviors and courtesies marking generational status and social distance. Nonetheless, all respondents were judged to be quite forthcoming in their responses. The respondents were, of course, self-selected for the final in-home interview contact. The interview completion time ranged from 40 to 60 minutes. Respondent fatigue was not a factor.

## Findings Regarding the Sample of 89 Women

### *Demographics of the Hispanic Women*

*General.* The sample was predominantly Catholic (78.7%) and almost one-fifth (19.1%) were Protestant. While one-fifth had a yearly income of less than \$10,000, 29.2% had a yearly income of greater than \$30,000. The majority of the women were married (59.6%), almost 8% had never married, 10.1% were either divorced or separated, and 22.5% were widowed. Almost 80% of the women lived in, and owned, their own home.

*Education.* As a group, the 89 Hispanic women were fairly well-educated. While almost one-fifth (18%) had less than a high school education, over one-quarter (28%) had a high school education, and one-third (33.7%) had at least a college degree.

*Employment.* It was found that over one-third (39%) of the women were employed full-time, almost one-third (32.6%) were retired, and 16.9% had never worked outside the home.

*Health.* The sample of Hispanic women indicated that they believed they were in fairly good health: over four-fifths (80.9%) reported good or excellent health, 17.9% reported fair health, and only 2.2% indicated that they were in poor health.

*Children.* A large proportion (79.8%) of the Hispanic women had living children. However, 39.3% of the women did not have a son and 41.6% had no daughter (the implications of this will be discussed).

*Ethnic Background.* Nine percent of the women indicated that they were of Puerto Rican background, almost one-quarter (24.7%) were of Cuban background, and the majority (52.8%) identified themselves as having Spanish ancestry.

*Nativity.* It was found that the largest percentage of women were born in the United States: 47.2% in Florida and 22.5% elsewhere in the States. Over ten percent (11.2%) were born in Cuba, 9% were born in Puerto Rico, and 10.1% were born in another Latin American country. The great majority of foreign born women had been in the States for a long time; only 5.6% had come within the past ten years.

### *Satisfactions in Life*

The 89 women were questioned about their satisfaction with components of their lives. Their levels of satisfaction were high, but the relative distribution of areas of satisfaction provide insight into how they viewed their lives.

The women were most satisfied with their families (96.6% of all), friendships (95.5%), and overall lives (91%). Slightly less satisfaction was felt for running a home (89.9%), religious activities (87.6%), leisure time activities (83.1%), being a wife (83.1%), and raising children (82.0%).

Those areas in which the women were least satisfied included their occupations or major roles in life and in their spouse or lover (each 79.8%). The lowest area of satisfaction was with one's community.



*Ethnic Identification*

The maintenance of cultural norms of behavior (including caregiving responsibilities) necessitate some identification with the traditional culture. The Hispanic respondents were asked about their identification with their Hispanic heritage and it was found that over half (57.3%) of the women did identify themselves as Hispanic; 42.7% identified themselves as American. A much larger percentage of the women believed that the American community saw them as Hispanic (73%) and that the Hispanic community saw them as Hispanic (76.4%). It is unknown what the implications of such views are for those women who identified themselves as American.

The majority of the women felt either somewhat close (43.8%) or very close (46.1%) to the Hispanic community. Only 10% indicated that they did not at all feel close to this community. And while one-third of the women indicated that most or all of their friends were Hispanic, 39.3% indicated that friends were evenly divided between Hispanic and non-Hispanic. Slightly over one-fourth of the women (28.1%) indicated that they had few Hispanic friends.

*Perceptions Regarding Gender Equity*

Questions were posed to the sample of Hispanic women regarding their perception of equity between men and women in the home, at work, and in caregiving responsibilities.

*Employment.* It was found that 13.5% of the women did not believe that women should work outside the home. Only 39.3% of the women believed that raising children can satisfy the needs of women. And 30% of the respondents indicated their belief that the children of working women are less-well adjusted than those children of mothers who stay at home. Almost one-quarter of the women (23.6%) felt that women are less reliable in jobs outside the home.

*Family Obligations.* The women were asked about their perceptions regarding the sharing of responsibilities between men and women in certain areas and 94.4% believed that such equity should exist in child care, 77.5% in housekeeping tasks, and 73% in cooking responsibilities.

The women were asked about whether or not children should always celebrate holidays with their parents and almost one-quarter (23.6%) said they should not. Yet, very high percentages of the Hispanic women felt that adult children, not formal service agencies, should care for their elderly parents that children should share their homes with elderly parents (83.1%), and that no matter how inconvenient, contact should be maintained between children and their elderly parents (97.8%).

### *Actual Gender Equity in Their Lives*

To determine actual gender equity, the women were questioned about who undertakes certain tasks and decision-making: male or female members of the family or shared responsibilities. Table 1 shows the gender of the family members most likely to be responsible, and the percentage for whom shared responsibilities were mentioned, for each task.

Clearly, the reality of gender equity is at some odds with the ideal relationships perceived by the women. Traditional sex-specific roles were reflected between men (e.g., income earners, repairs, car maintenance) and women (e.g., cooking, child care, grocery shopping). There were some examples of changes by way of shared responsibilities (e.g., financial decisions, choosing vacations, funeral arrangements). Yet, the lack of shared responsibilities for cleaning, cooking, laundering, doing dishes, and grocery shopping would indicate that the women continued to be engaged in traditional activities.

### *Findings Regarding the Four Cohorts of Women*

Table 2 indicates the distribution of the four age groups comprising the 89 Hispanic women who participated in the study. To assess expectations between the four generations of Hispanic women, chi-square statistics were computed by age group. Although none of the statistics was significant, there were interesting differences.

*Demographic Differences Between the Four Cohorts.* While it is useful to describe the overall characteristics of Hispanic women who participated in this study, the description of each of the four cohorts adds important information regarding age differences.

Table 1

*Degree of Gender Equity in Various Familial Responsibilities*

<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>% Responsible</i>	<i>Shared %</i>
Provides Income	Males	70.8%	18.0%
Cleans the House	Females	84.3	10.1
Cooks Meals	Females	85.4	13.5
Does Laundry	Females	87.6	10.1
Child Care Tasks	Females	57.3	21.3
Helps Child with Homework	Females	40.4	29.2
Does House Repairs	Males	57.3	13.5
Washes Car	Males	65.2	15.7
Handles Car Care	Males	76.4	6.7
Does Yard Work	Males	51.7	19.1
Makes Financial Decisions	Males	24.7	67.4
Pays Bills (Keeps Checkbook)	Females	41.6	20.2
Decides Where to Live	Males	13.5	79.8
Selects Furniture	Females	47.2	48.3
Shops for Groceries	Females	66.3	28.1
Decides to Have Children	Females	12.4	70.8
Selects Name for Children	Females	24.7	60.7
Makes Funeral Arrangements	Males	25.0	49.0
Chooses Vacations	Males	10.1	77.5

Table 2

*Age Groups of Four Generations of Hispanic Women*

<i>Group</i>	<i>Age Range</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1	18-39	32	36.0
2	40-59	23	25.8
3	60-75	23	25.8
4	76 and over	11	12.4
Total		89	100.0

Table 3 vividly shows the expected inverse relationship between age cohort and income levels. While two-thirds of the oldest group of women have incomes under \$5,000 a year, none have incomes of over \$50,000. For the youngest group of women

Table 3

*Income Levels by Age Groups for Four Generations of Hispanic Women*

<i>Age Group</i>	<i>Income Less Than \$5,000</i>	<i>Income More Than \$50,000</i>
1	15.6%	53.1%
2	26.1	30.4
3	50.0	18.2
4	66.6	0.0

the opposite relationship was found; only 15.6% have incomes less than \$5,000 while over half have incomes more than \$50,000. In analyzing the data, the relationship between income and such variables as health, employment, and ability to afford alternatives to family care will need to be considered.

An expected inverse relationship was found between age group and proportion married: 84.4% for Group 1, 69.6% for Group 2, 40.9% for Group 3, and 8.3% for Group 4. A similar relationship was found between age group and the percentage who graduated high school and/or attended college or trade school: 100% for Group 1, 91.3% for Group 2, 68.2% for Group 3, and 41.7% for Group 4.

A rather clear difference was found between the youngest two cohorts and the oldest two cohorts in the perception of health as being either good or excellent: 96.9% for Group 1 and 91.3% for Group 2; 59.1% for Group 3 and 58.3% for Group 4. The differences were to be expected.

A somewhat surprising finding was the relationship between age cohorts and percentage who were born in Florida. The youngest two groups of cohorts were more likely to be born in Latin countries outside the U.S. (seen in Table 4).

Table 4 implies that assumptions should not be made about the relationship between chronological age and likelihood of foreign birth. Clearly, the oldest two age cohorts were born in the State within which they live in their old age. And though they might have grown up in Hispanic neighborhoods, the influence of the dominant society was constantly apparent to them. Conversely, the younger two age cohorts, who might be considered

Table 4

*Place of Birth for Four Generations of Hispanic Women*

<i>Age Group</i>	<i>Florida</i>	<i>Born Outside U.S.</i>
1	31.3%	31.3%
2	26.1	47.8
3	72.7	22.7
4	83.3	8.3

to be more likely to reflect contemporary values and behaviors regarding gender equity, would have been influenced by the traditional norms of the native country of birth (although the age at which a woman came to the U.S. is an important consideration).

The general levels of satisfaction were assessed by age cohort and are presented in Table 5. To highlight those who felt strongly about their levels of satisfaction, shown are the percentages of women who felt very satisfied with the various dimensions of their lives. Clearly, general analysis glosses over important distinctions observed between different age groups of Hispanic women.

Table 5

*Percentages of Hispanic Women Reporting Being Very Satisfied, by Age Group*

<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group 2</i>	<i>Group 3</i>	<i>Group 4</i>
With Life	21.9	21.7	18.2	25.0
Running a Home	18.8	21.5	50.0	50.0
Being a Wife	31.3	34.8	63.2	75.0
With Spouse or Lover	34.4	47.8	45.5	58.3
Raising Children	28.1	52.2	59.1	66.7
With Occupation	9.4	17.4	36.4	41.7
With Family	62.5	43.5	63.6	50.0
With Friendships	37.5	43.5	63.6	50.0
With Leisure Time	12.5	30.4	50.0	50.0
With Religion	21.9	43.5	22.7	25.0

While there were not major differences in satisfaction with life, the older two age cohorts received more satisfaction from running a home, being a wife, raising children, occupation, friendships, and leisure-time. The youngest group was generally not as satisfied as the other three; the only appreciable distinction of the second group was their satisfaction with religion. While 22% of groups 1 and 2 were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their communities, none of the women in the oldest two groups was so dissatisfied.

*The Role of Women.* One-third of the youngest group of women disagreed that women should work and develop careers outside the home. None of the second group, 15% of the third group, and only ten percent of the fourth group disagreed with such a contention.

In response to the statement that raising children as a full-time job cannot keep most women satisfied, 53% of the youngest group of women disagreed and felt that such a responsibility could, in fact, be satisfying. This was in contrast with 26% for the second group, 34% for the third group, and 36% for the fourth group.

In response to the statement that the children of working women are less-well adjusted than those children of women who remain at home, one-quarter of the group 1 women agreed, 17% of group 2 agreed, and 30% from group 3 agreed. More than half of the women from group 4 (55%) believed that the adjustment of children was affected by the employed status of their mothers. Similarly, it was the oldest group of women who most felt (36%) that women were less reliable on the job than were men. Each of the other three groups had less than one-quarter (22%) who agreed with such a statement.

*Family Relationships.* All the women from the oldest group believed that children were obliged to celebrate holidays with their elderly parents. The level for the other three groups of women were 78% for Group 2, 60% for Group 2, and 78% for Group 3. All of the oldest women believed that children should share their homes with their elderly parents. This view was shared by 91% of Group 1, 67% of Group 2, and 78% of Group 3. All the women from the youngest group felt that it should be children, and not social agencies, who should care for their parents. The level for

the three other groups of women were 87%, 78%, and 91%, in ascending age group order.

*Ethnic Identity.* The four groups of women were asked whether they considered themselves to be Hispanic or American. It was found that over half of the samples from Group 1 (59%), Group 2 (78%), and Group 3 (52%) considered themselves to be Hispanic. Such Hispanic identity was the case for only 18% of the oldest group of Hispanic women.

Although the oldest group was most likely to identify themselves as Americans, they (and those from Group 2) were more likely to believe that Americans saw them as Hispanic (82%), in contrast to Group 2 (66%) and Group 3 (70%). Similarly, it was the women from Group 4 who were more likely to believe that Hispanics saw them as Hispanics, compared to 78% from Group 1, and 74% from both Groups 2 and 3.

While slightly more than half of the women from Groups 2, 3, and 4 felt very close to the Hispanic community, this was true for only one-third of the women from the youngest group. About a third of the women from Groups 1, 2, and 3 indicated that most or all of their friends were Hispanic. This was true for only one-quarter of the oldest group of women. Finally, those who admitted to having few or no Hispanic friends were represented by one-third of those women from Groups 1 and 2, one-quarter of the women from Group 3, and only one-tenth of those from Group 4 (the oldest group of women).

### Interpretations

In considering a "Hispanic population," it is necessary to consider their unique as well as common features. Indeed, whether young or old, the Hispanic women who participated in this study share little more than having a Spanish surname and an ability to speak Spanish. Indeed, as seen in this study, not all Hispanic women speak Spanish, or wish to speak Spanish, or see themselves as Hispanic.

*General Conclusions.* There seems to be a significant weakening of the marital bond. Along with the anticipated proportion of women who are widowed, this study found a surprisingly larger group of women who were divorced. Perhaps this is a reflection of

acculturation and/or living in the U.S. for lengthy periods of time. One might also project the likelihood that divorce will increase among successive cohorts of Hispanic women in the future.

Another finding from this study is that education and employment did provide the Hispanic women with a means for a more comfortable life. It is suspected that education and employment not only translate into greater economic security and good health, but might also result in a greater likelihood of acculturation and assimilation into the dominant culture (and adoption of less-traditional attitudes and expectations).

*Differences Between Groups.* This study found differences between the four groups of Hispanic women which beg for further research and study. The youngest group (18–39) held some traditional views. They were more likely to believe that women should not work outside the home. They were more likely to believe that child-rearing can satisfy women. They all felt that children, rather than formal agencies, should provide care for elderly parents. And they were less-likely to feel very close to the Hispanic community. It is not known whether their views are reflections of the fact that they have not, as yet, faced the challenges resulting from having elderly parents or as a result of their maintenance of traditional norms for familial caregiving responsibilities.

Group 2, those women between the ages of 40 to 59, can be considered members of the “Sandwich Generation.” All of these women believed that women should work outside the home. It was also this group of women who were more likely to feel that child rearing was not satisfying to women and were more likely to believe that the children of working women were less well-adjusted. In addition, it was this group of women who were less likely to agree that adult children had an obligation to celebrate holidays with their elderly parents. The women in Group 2, somewhat paradoxically, had the highest proportion who identified themselves as Hispanic; yet, on the other hand, were less likely to indicate that most or all of their friends were Hispanic.

An interpretation of the interesting, and somewhat conflicting, responses of this group of women is that they are truly caught



between their own needs, that of their children, and those of their elderly parents. For the women in this group, the needs of their parents are not hypothetical but are very real. These women might face economic realities of competing demands which can necessitate the need for employment outside the home. This group of women appear to be less-traditional in their views regarding women remaining in the home and in the caregiving responsibilities for children and for elderly parents.

Group 3 included women who were the young-old, ages 60 through 75. The responses of these women were not especially distinctive, in contrast with those from the other three groups. A somewhat smaller proportion of the Group 3 women, in comparison to the other three groups, believed that children, rather than social agencies, should care for elderly parents. Perhaps it is the heterogeneity of the women in Group 3 which has precluded any major tendency in perceptions and expectations of this group.

Group 4 includes the old-old, those who are between 76 and 89 years of age. Women in this group were more likely to believe that the children of working women are less-well adjusted and that women are less reliable on the job. Clearly, such views can be interpreted to be traditional (in that women should remain at home).

The elderly women in Group 4 also reflect a concern for the maintenance of family responsibility. For example, all the women believed that children have an obligation to celebrate holidays with their elderly parents and all believed that children should share their homes with their elderly parents. Over 90% of these women felt that children should care for their elderly parents, rather than having them cared for by social agencies.

The women in Group 4 were less likely to identify themselves as Hispanics, yet were more likely to believe that both the American and Hispanic communities saw them as Hispanic. Paradoxically, a greater proportion of these women felt very close to Hispanics and had a much smaller number of women who had few or no Hispanic friends. More research is needed to determine the reasons for the fact that these elderly women, as a group, do not consider themselves to be Hispanic and yet feel, and are a part of the Hispanic community (by virtue of their friendships).

*Final Thoughts.* Hispanic women represented in this study are a heterogeneous group. In many ways they are a "marginal group," less-likely to identify themselves within a Hispanic lifestyle, yet believe both the dominant non-Hispanic community and the Hispanic community perceive them to be Hispanic (and distinct). Thus, there may be reason for greater attention to the adjustment of these women. This attention is not only a call for continued research, but for the practice community to provide needed counseling and support services for such "marginal" individuals.

The overall purpose of this study was to determine the degree to which values and attitudes vary between different generations of Hispanic women with regards to gender-related roles and relationships. Indeed, Brody, et al. (1983) had explored perceptions and expectations between three cohorts of women from the general community, and she found that each generation had different perceptions regarding their responsibilities for children and for elderly parents. Continuation of the research reported in this article will add the dimension of Hispanic ethnicity to Brody's findings.

While such information will be interesting in-and-of itself, so too will it be related to the identification of emerging needs among this group of females. This study has documented the distinctions between groups of Hispanic women by age group and within age groups. No longer should Hispanic women (regardless of ethnic origin or chronological age) be regarded as a homogeneous group. To do so would be wrong and sustain erroneous stereotypes of Hispanic women. To do so would also result in the failure to address emerging needs and pressures being faced by Hispanic women who are in the process of change from traditional to more contemporary (and American) ways.

## References

- Allinger, R. L. & Causey, M. R. (1993). Home health service utilization by Hispanic elderly immigrants: A longitudinal study. *Home Health Care Services Quarterly*, 14, (2/3), 85-95.
- Brody, E. M.; Johnson, P. T.; Julcomer, M. C.; and Lang, A. M. (1983). Women's changing roles and help to elderly parents: Attitudes of three generations of women. *Journal of Gerontology*, 38, 597-607.

- Burnette, D. (1998). Conceptual and methodological considerations in research with non-white ethnic elders. In M. Potocky & A. Farmer (Ed.), *Social Work Research with Minority and Oppressed Populations*. 71-91. New York: The Haworth Press.
- Cox, C. & Monk, A. (1993). Hispanic culture and family care of Alzheimer's patients. *Health and Social Work*, 18, (2), 92-100.
- Cox, C. & Monk, A. (1996). Strain among caregivers: Comparing the experiences of African American and Hispanic caregivers of Alzheimer's relatives. *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 43, (2), 93-105.
- Crandall, R. (1991). *Gerontology: A Behavioral Science Approach*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Crawford, L. (1989). Quoted In Krause, N.; Van Tran, F.; and Bennett, J. (1989). Age differences in the acculturation process. *Psychology of Aging*, 3, 321-332.
- Escobar, J. I., Burnam, M. A., Karno, M. Forsythe, A. & Golding, M. (1987). Somatization in the community. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 44, 713-718.
- Garcia, J. L. (1985). A needs assessment of elderly Hispanics in an inner city senior citizen complex: Implications for practice. *Journal of Applied Gerontology*, 4 (1), 72-85.
- Garcia, J. L., Kosberg, J. I., Henderson, J. N., & Cuervo Henderson, C. (1991). Elderly Hispanic women in cultural transition: Implications for practice. Paper presented at the 44th Annual Scientific Meeting of the Gerontological Society of America, San Francisco, California.
- Harwood, D. G., Barker, W. W., Cantillon, M., et al. (In press). Depressive symptomology in first degree family caregivers of Alzheimer's disease patients: A cross-ethnic comparison.
- Kemp, B. I., Staples, F. & Lopez-Aqueres, W. (1987). Epidemiology of depression and dysphoria in an elderly Hispanic population. *Journal of The American Geriatric Society*, 35, 920-926.
- Krause, N. & Goldenhar, L. M. (1992). Acculturation and psychological distress in three groups of elderly Hispanics. *Journal of Gerontology*, 47, S279-S288.
- Lacayo, C. (1982). Triple jeopardy: Under-served Hispanic elders. *Generations*, 6, 25, 58.
- Maldonado, D., Jr. (1975). The Chicano aged, *Social Work*, 20, 213-216.
- Mangum, W. P., Garcia, J. L., Kosberg, J. I., Mullins, L. C., & Barresi, C. M. (1994). Racial/ethnic variations in informal caregiving. *Educational Gerontology*, 20, 715-731.
- Markides, K. S. (1987). Hispanic Americans. In G. Maddox, (Ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Aging*. New York: Springer, 322-323.
- Sheppard, H., Mullins, L., & Longino, C. (1985). Epidemiology of aging in Latin America and the Caribbean: A comparative perspective for the adoption of policies for the health care of the elderly (A survey in Tampa and Miami). Report for the National Institute on Aging.
- Shermyen, A. H. (ed.) (1990). *Florida Statistical Abstract*. Gainesville, FL: The University Press of Florida.
- Social Security Administration (1990). Cited in Torres-Gil, F. (1992). *The New Aging: Politics and Change in America*. New York: Auburn House.

- Torres-Gil, F. and Negm, M. P. (1980). Policy issues concerning the Hispanic elderly. *Aging* (March-April), 2-5.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census (1990 & 1996). *Statistical Abstract of the United States*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Valle, R. and Mendoza, L. (1978). *The Elder Latino*. San Diego, CA: Campanile Press.
- Vazquez, N.; Garcia, R. I.; and DeLeon, B. (1987). Sex roles and Perceptions of femininity and masculinity of Hispanic women. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 11, 409-425.
- Yancey, W. (1987). Quoted in Bean, D. F. and Tienda, M. *The Hispanic Population of the United States*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

